

# Vancouver's LAST GENERAL



After 160 years of Army history in Vancouver, Brig. Gen. Daniel L. York will be Vancouver's last general officer when the headquarters of the Army Reserve's 104th Division moves to Fort Lewis within the next year.

## Departure of 104th Division headquarters is a major turning point in Army's history here

By ERIK ROBINSON  
Columbia staff writer

The last in a distinguished line of generals to serve in Vancouver leaves the impression that he's anything but a hard-core warrior.

Army Brig. Gen. Daniel L. York envisioned himself as a missionary while growing up.

In his life outside the military, he's served as a church pastor, he enjoys singing and songwriting in the acoustic-contemporary style of John Denver, and he currently heads a Christian-oriented leadership organization called First 600.

"I have never had to raise my weapon

at anyone, and I'm an infantryman," he said. "Go figure." Yet he may be perfectly suited as Vancouver's last general. York embodies the ethic expressed by George C. Marshall, another general who once commanded troops at Vancouver Barracks: "The only way human beings can win a war is to prevent it."

With the Army drawing down its 160-year connection to Vancouver, history will reflect the last general to serve here as a peacemaker in Marshall's image. York commands 1,950 soldiers in the

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The Timberwolf logo in York's office signifies the 104th's distinguished history as an infantry unit.

### Did you know?

■ The 104th leader training division's 1,950 soldiers staff three brigades to train cadets in the Reserve Officer Training Corps.

## General:

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Army Reserve's 104th Division, which will be honored during a departure ceremony Saturday at the Fort Vancouver National Site.

### End of an era

When York and his command staff depart for Fort Lewis sometime within the next year, it will close an era. Vancouver's Army connection has endured since 1849, when the Army took over Fort Vancouver from Great Britain's departing Hudson's Bay Company.

"It is a tremendous loss for our community," said Vancouver Mayor Royce Pollard.

Pollard has a special insight on the matter, having retired 21 years ago in Vancouver after his final posting as an Army lieutenant colonel in command of Vancouver Barracks.

Even though York has emphasized the Army intends to honor its long-standing relationship to Vancouver with several reserve brigades remaining here, Pollard said losing the 104th's headquarters will erode the city's strong military connection in the years ahead. The Army ended its active-duty presence at Vancouver Barracks nine years ago.

The loss of the Army reserve headquarters is another setback, Pollard said. "In military circles, there's a great amount of prestige in having a general officer headquarters," he said. "When you take the general officer's flag down, that's not a good sign."

As mayor, Pollard has overseen the U.S. government's hand-over of the west barracks to the city. Like the ornate houses along Officers Row, turned over to the city two decades ago, the 16 buildings in the west barracks are destined to be refurbished for private use. The National Park Service is expected to take over the World War I-era structures east of Fort Vancouver Way once York and his command staff depart for Fort Lewis.

A National Guard training center will then be constructed elsewhere in the city, leaving the Vancouver Barracks devoid of a military presence.

All of this leaves some Army veterans a little wistful.

"It's a sad day to see them moving on," Clark College President Bob Knight said. "It's another step in the military moving away from Vancouver. It's played such a significant



Army Maj. Jeff Davis, left, visits the office of Brig. Gen. Daniel York. The departure of the Army Reserve division's headquarters, in a World War I-era building off the Parade Ground at Vancouver Barracks, will end a 160-year Army presence on the site.

role in Vancouver, since 1849." Knight also commanded active-duty troops at Vancouver Barracks.

As with Pollard and other Army officers who forged ties to Vancouver, Knight opted to retire in the community where he served. As a lieutenant colonel in 2000, Knight closed out the active-duty Army era that began May 13, 1849, when Maj. John Hatheway arrived to take command of the lonely outpost near the far edge of the continent.

It's no coincidence that Vancouver traditionally goes all out to celebrate the Fourth of July, Memorial Day and Veterans Day, Knight said.

"The military commanders all stayed in this area," he said. "They all fell in love with Vancouver because of its love for the military and its patriotism. Future generations aren't going to fully appreciate that."

Knight retired from the Army in 2000, but his current office at Clark College sits on former Army property.

### Part of community

Until the Army opened Camp Bonneville in rural east Clark County in 1909, soldiers used the terrain stretching north as far as Fourth Plain Boulevard for maneuvers and as a firing range. Maj. Jeff Davis, a Clark County native who serves on York's command staff, said the Army opened Camp Bonneville partly in response to complaints from residents of the growing city.

In that respect, the present-day college campus represents the first stage of the physical contraction of the once-sprawling Army compound in Vancouver.

The Army's pullback from Vancouver will be complete when Brig. Gen. York departs for Fort Lewis.

York, who makes his home in



A wall shows commanders of the 104th Division, which distinguished itself under the command of famed Gen. Terry Allen in World War II. In 1946, it was reformulated as a reserve division headquartered in Vancouver. Today, it emphasizes leadership training.

### If you go

■ **What:** Celebrate Freedom Festival. This year's event will bid farewell to the Army Reserve's 104th Division.

■ **Where:** All day Saturday, starting with a pancake breakfast at 7 a.m. A formal ceremony will begin with an Air Force flyover at 10 a.m. At noon, a community festival will begin with food, equipment displays and historical re-enactors.

■ **Where:** Parade Ground and along East Fifth Street in the Fort Vancouver National Site.

■ **Cost:** Free

Newberg, Ore., recalled the first time he and his wife drove along Fort Vancouver Way in 1999. "We were just immediately touched by the history," he said. "You don't expect a fort in the middle of a town like this."

That, in modern, security-conscious times, became part of the problem. In contrast to the fortified perimeter of Fort Lewis — founded in 1917 as

Camp Lewis, a sub-installation of the Army's regional command in Vancouver — the Army was reluctant to continue to invest in an outpost so directly intertwined with the surrounding community.

"It became a security issue," Pollard said. "You couldn't lock it down."

In recent years, with the barracks exclusively dedicated as a hub for citizen soldiers of the Army Reserve, the military has become even more interconnected with the community at large. The 104th Division has been a magnet for citizens who live and work in the community during the week and prepare for deployment as American soldiers across the globe.

Over time, to serve soldiers and their families closer to Fort Lewis, Pollard said the surrounding community will feel the loss.

He specifically recalled the flood of 1996.

"We had soldiers filling sandbags with us," he said. "That's not necessarily something that Fort Lewis would do. These were our citizen soldiers. They were doing it not because they

were soldiers, but because they were citizens of our community."

### Footnote of history

Rather than trying to maintain an Army presence, Pollard said, he believes it's important to refurbish the former barracks into new uses — while always maintaining the military flavor. An Army recruiting office should remain, for example. Retired veterans should be able to frequent the old post exchange.

"We'll still be able to talk about the great history, about Gen. Marshall and where Ullyses S. Grant lived, and O.O. Howard," Pollard said. "The threads of history are not only in this community; they go from this community to the entire country."

With the departure of the 104th Division headquarters, Vancouver will fade from an active player in the current events of our time to a footnote of history.

"You're going to have less and less of a military influence in the community," Knight said.

York is well-acquainted with the history in Vancouver.

George Marshall was stationed in Vancouver before going on to become the Army's chief of staff during World War II and, afterward, namesake of the post-war reconstruction of Europe. Marshall, Ullyses S. Grant, O.O. Howard and George McClellan are among the celebrated military minds to rotate through Vancouver.

In that sense, York is the last of their kind.

"I'm saddened that we're leaving," he said. "At Fort Lewis, we became a tiny fish in an overstocked pond."

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On Page A4: Timeline of the Army's history in Vancouver. ■ Three notable portraits